

WEST HILL POND IMPROVEMENT NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING NOTES - AUGUST 26, 2009



On August 26, 2009 the City of Auburn Mayor and City staff met with neighbors of the West Hill Neighborhood to discuss neighborhood concerns and Stormwater Pond Improvement Projects for Bry's Cove and the South 296th Street Ponds.

Staff in Attendance: MAYOR PETE LEWIS, COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER DUANNA RICHARDS, COMMUNITY SERVICES PROJECT ASSISTANT KIRSTEN REYNOLDS, ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF BOB KARNOFSKI, TRANSPORTATION PLANNER CHRIS HANKINS, STORM DRAINAGE ENGINEER TIM CARLAW, CIVIL ENGINEER-UTILITIES JOEL CHALMBERS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS VOLUNTEER ALICIA TOMLAN

Community Members in Attendance: AAROLD ULFERS, BOB TIDBALL, CALVIN WHEELER, DANIEL & GINI HIEF, DOUG & CARROL REYNOLDS, JOSEPH SCHULER, KEN STUDLEY, KIM ZEILLMANN, LARRY OSBURN, MARA HEIMAN, MARIE-ANNE HARKNESS, MARLENE BALSTER, MILTON WESTON, NANCY NEUENHOF, NANCY OSBURN, STEVE MAYER AND TOM & MICKEY O' BRIEN

Announcements

- Community Services Manager Duanna Richards welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending and asked City staff to introduce themselves. Mayor Pete Lewis was introduced and facilitated the meeting. Mayor Lewis indicated the primary purpose of the meeting was for the City to listen to the residents' concerns, consider solutions, respond to questions they could answer immediately and identify items for follow up. The City takes notes of the meeting, which are then sent out to the attendees. We listen to the community and get ideas for solutions from the residents; residents were invited to ask questions and give potential solutions for problems.
- **Mayor's Update** -- residents were encouraged to sign up for the Mayor's Update, an e-newsletter Mayor Lewis sends out every Friday about what's taken place in the City during the week, upcoming events, etc. He also uses the listserv to send out alerts about road closures, emergencies, etc. as a way to keep the community informed. Since this is a listserv, if you decide you don't want to continue receiving it you can unsubscribe at any time.

General Questions/Comments

- One resident expressed they need a small community library for the neighborhood. They recommended the location next to the Fire Station.
- ***What is the City doing to cultivate the involvement and activity of the recently annexed residents on the West Hill?***
Mayor Lewis explained that people located in different areas of the city identify with the greater community very differently. The City does outreach to every part of the city to inform them about City programs such as the Parks, Arts and Recreation programs. There are plans to build a Community Center as well as a Tween Center around Les Gove Park; the City is looking into supporting transportation to bring people into the community. It has never been a priority to separate services and programs; the goal of these facilities is to bring people into the core of the community, not to offer separate programs in different locations.

City staff has been working with the surrounding area School Districts (Kent, Federal Way, Auburn and Derringer) to build relationships and promote partnerships. The Auburn Reporter is now being delivered to areas where it previously wasn't. The work we do is all about neighborhoods; there are a tremendous number of committees, non-profits and businesses all working in partnerships.

- ***How was it determined who was invited to this meeting?***

Staff tries to identify the best area that could or will be affected and notices are mailed out to people's homes two weeks before the meeting.

- ***Can a stream be moved?***

Mayor Lewis explained the City isn't allowed to move streams. Water is coming off this hill to the valley floor and filling up the area with water. Water spreads out over an agricultural area instead of being channeled out to the Green River. Auburn is trying to get the water flowing back to the Green River. Auburn has been working in conjunction with King County to make sure they're doing their part to maintain the channels. There needs to be a constant push from the City and the residents for this project to take place.

Public Safety Related Questions/Comments

- A resident thanked the Police Department for changing the community culture of using the cul-de-sacs as parking lots.

- ***Can cars park on both sides of the street?***

There are areas that allow for parking on both sides of the street and areas where it's only allowed on one side. If signs indicate there is no parking then people parking there could be ticketed.

- ***Block Watch & NNO***

Assistant Police Chief Bob Karnofski talked about Block Watch; it's built on the concept of neighbors watching out for each other, because they know better than anyone else who belongs in a neighborhood and who doesn't. If you think "maybe I should call 9-1-1 about this," you should. Residents were encouraged to set up a Block Watch. Once the group is formed Community Programs Officer Andy Gould will come out and have a formal training regarding what to watch for, how to react and how to get more neighborhood participation. It is recommended that Block Watch groups get together at least once a quarter. A gathering could include hosting a National Night Out (NNO) party which takes place annually on the first Tuesday in August. NNO provides an opportunity to increase awareness and safety in the neighborhood; the Mayor and Councilmembers take part in NNO every year.

The City is set up with six different police districts; the entire West Hill is one district. Officers are assigned to an area for up to two years so they get to know the neighborhoods they're serving.

- ***If you have a problem or see anything suspicious call 9-1-1!***

Residents were encouraged to report everything to 9-1-1. The citizens of Auburn own the 9-1-1 system. You should call 9-1-1 whenever you have an emergency, feel something suspicious is going on, need to speak with an officer or file a report (online reporting is also available www.auburnwa.gov/Emergency/Police/Citizen_Online_Police_Reporting.asp if you would prefer to file your report that way). **PLEASE NOTE:** If calling from a cell phone you need to ask for an "Auburn Call Receiver."

Auburn shares ownership of the 9-1-1 system with other South King County cities and the calls go to a dispatch center so residents shouldn't worry about tying up the phone line when making non-emergency calls. When you call 9-1-1 it will be answered by a "Call Receiver." The Call Receiver will determine whether or not your call is an emergency to be handled right away or to have an officer make contact with you to file a non-emergency report. They will ask questions which are specifically designed to obtain information so that the proper response can be made for your call.

If you want to know what the officer finds out be sure to let the Call Receiver know you DO want to be contacted by the officer when they've completed their investigation.

In addition to emergency issues, residents should also call 9-1-1 for non-emergency issues such as street lights out, stop lights out, missing stop signs, fireworks, loose dogs, sewer backups, water leaks, etc. An alternative is to report them via the City website. The link is under Online Services at the top of the page and is called Online Citizen Report (half way down): www.auburnwa.gov/Business/public_works/Online_Citizen_Report.asp.

- **ONLINE CRIME MAPPING**

The City of Auburn launched an online crime mapping tool that allows citizens to view reported criminal activity throughout the city with near real-time data. The service is provided by CrimeReports.com and is free to the public.

Using this website, citizens can get easy to read incident crime maps from data that is uploaded directly from the Auburn Police Department's activity reports. Crime incident data typically includes: Incident type; date; location; distance from citizen's address; event identification/case number; and/or brief crime incident description. The reported location of registered sex offenders will also be provided on the map.

Citizens can also sign up to receive automatic daily, weekly or monthly email alerts if/when crimes occur near their home, office, local school, etc. and tools such as filters and analytics will allow citizens to search for specific crimes in their area, or to view trends via charts and graphs.

CrimeReports.com can be accessed via the City's website (www.auburnwa.gov/crimereports). This enhancement, coupled with the already existing online police reporting service that was launched in 2007 allowing citizens to file non-emergency reports, is one more way that the City is using technology to increase public safety and awareness.

For more information on these services, contact the City of Auburn Police Department at (253) 931-3080.

- ***How can I be prepared for emergencies?***

Emergency Preparedness Volunteer Alicia Tomlan gave a brief presentation regarding programs citizens can participate in to prepare their homes, families and neighborhoods in case of disaster. The Emergency Preparedness Division offers Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training; it is an eight week hands-on practice in such topics as first aid, triage and survival skills. Another program discussed was Map Your Neighborhood, which is now being combined with the Block Watch training. Neighbors are taught how to get organized before a disaster happens. Generalized disaster preparedness training is also available to interested community groups and organizations. To schedule any of these classes for your neighborhood, contact their office at (253) 876-1925 or e-mail emergencyprep@auburnwa.gov; you can also visit their website to see a training schedule: <http://www.auburnwa.gov/disaster>.

- ***What is the plan for people living in the valley when the dam breaks?***

Mayor Lewis explained that the Howard Hanson Dam is not in any danger of breaking; the earth embankment next to the dam is leaking. Right now the Corp of Engineers is drilling holes and filling them with concrete in efforts to try and stop the leakage of water. If water does flood the valley floor it's possible there might be two-three feet of water. The City is performing several emergency exercises in the near future to help prepare for this event. Once water leaves the Howard Hanson Dam it will take six-eight hours to hit the valley.

Because West Hill is on Lake Haven water residents won't have sewage problems like everyone else around the city. The City has met with the utility providers to come up with a recovery plan. Flooding could take out the power substation located on the valley floor. That station would be closed and if/when that substation has water they will reroute the power. Mayor explained the biggest problem isn't electricity, it will be natural gas. There is a huge provider station around South 277th Street that could be in danger of not operating. The City will continue to work with all the providers to get a plan in place.

The City is highly recommending that everyone get flood insurance. It is a federal program so rates are the same no matter who you buy through. Anytime water comes from outside and hits your house, causing damage, it's considered a flood; your homeowners insurance will not cover this type of event without additional flood insurance.

- ***Where are farm animals supposed to go in the event of a flood?***

A resident explained the Corp of Engineers told farmers on the valley floor they would be responsible to move all their heavy machinery and animals out of the area ahead of time in the event of a flood. Residents asked where they were supposed to keep all their machinery and animals. Mayor Lewis expressed it is likely that the flood water would affect the animals; there have been some local efforts to help people but it is guaranteed that FEMA will not assist with evacuating animals. The City doesn't have the capability to transport animals so people with animals need to start making arrangements for them.

- ***Are the warehouses on the valley floor going to be asked to contain their chemicals?***

There were concerns that chemicals and pollutants from the warehouses on the valley floor would harm the environment if it floods. Mayor Lewis explained that the City doesn't have the authority to make companies do anything about containment. We have been telling them about the consequences since February. All the businesses have received invitations to public meetings and information from the City about the dangers of flooding.

Streets/Sewer/Traffic Related Questions/Comments

- Several people suggested a bus route along 51st Avenue South. Mayor Lewis agreed this makes sense and will have Transportation Planner Joe Welsh work with King County Metro on this issue. Seattle has received 60% of Metro's budget for many years; it's time for the south end to have our needs addressed.
- ***Can speed bumps be installed along South 300 Street - between 51st Street Ave. South to Meredith Hills Elementary?***

There was agreement that much of the speeding is happening right before and after school starts and ends. Mayor Lewis stated staff has some ideas on how to handle this.

Storm Pond Expansion Project Presentation

- Storm Drainage Engineer Tim Carlaw introduced the pond expansion projects for Bry's Cove and the South 296th Street ponds. The City of Auburn is proposing to maximize the use of these ponds to prevent downstream flood impacts. The storm ponds run adjacent to 296th Street; the goal is to hold more water back over a longer period of time, mitigating the peak flow down stream.

As part of this proposal, the two ponds would be expanded to increase storage capacity with modifications to the outlet controls to reduce the discharge rate to the downstream system. It is anticipated these improvements would dramatically reduce the current discharge by diminishing the peak flow, which in turn should reduce the downstream flooding.

These two storm pond projects will cost \$1.5 million; the City is applying for grant funding since the project costs are high to help keep utilities low for residents. The City of Auburn intends to submit an application through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for further assistance with project funding.

Phase one of the project will allow for an additional 5 acre feet of stormwater to be held. In phase two, additional expansion of the ponds will add 8.3 acre feet of stormwater storage.

The acquisition of an adjacent parcel will be needed to fully obtain the anticipated volume of storage.

Storm Pond Expansion Project Q&A

- ***Does the City have funding for the pond expansion?***
Staff is applying for the grant that will include the design and construction of the proposed projects. The project has been identified for Phase I implementation in 2010 at both locations, with Phase II in 2011.
- ***Was any of the \$1.5 million King County was using to mitigate flooding given to the City of Auburn?***
No, there wasn't a transfer of money from King County for any flood mitigation projects.
- ***Will the storm pond site meadow be cleared out?***
The City of Auburn's standards for storm water pond improvements/construction is much more aesthetic than what King County had previously required. The meadow would be enhanced, not stripped of its natural habitat.
- ***Can the City ensure people's yards won't flood anymore?***
The City was unaware of standing water on the north side of South 296th Street. The City can create an overflow area to prevent this from happening on a regular basis.

The City will perform a geotechnical analysis to evaluate all the issues, including but not limited to yards flooding. The goal won't be to store water permanently; the depth for the pond would be taken as deep as possible without penetrating ground water.

Development Related Questions/Comments

- ***Is there a restriction on how many adult family homes can be located in one area?***
No, the State of Washington is very liberal, so as long as public health issues don't arise there is no limit to how many adult family homes are operating in any one area.

- ***Will the 200+ home development still be built on West Hill?***

Before the annexation took place the City of Auburn looked at the area and realized they needed to get a handle on the infrastructure. King County was not paying any attention to and wasn't requiring developers to put in necessary infrastructure; this was an opportunity for the City to try and maintain quality development. King County did approved and permitted 24 separate projects before the annexation was officially passed, which will continue to move forward.

- ***What criteria must be met before the building moratorium is lifted?***

Auburn City Council put this moratorium into effect because of the flooding issues. Once a solution is found that stops the valley floor from flooding the moratorium will be lifted.

- ***Is this project being done to support future development?***

No, the City is trying to manage the flooding situation for the surrounding areas.

Summary of Solutions Discussed/Action Items

- 1) Transportation Planner Joe Welsh will work with King County Metro on creating a bus route along 51st Street Ave. South.
- 2) Mayor will have staff come up with creative ideas to prevent speeding along South 300 Street - between 51st Street Ave. South to Meredith Hills Elementary. Speeding is happening right before and after school starts and ends.
- 3) The City can create an overflow area to prevent yards from flooding on a regular basis on the north side of South 296th Street. The City will perform a geotechnical analysis to evaluate all the issues, including but not limited to yards flooding.

Community Services Team Contact Information:

- Duanna Richards, Community Services Manager, (253) 931-3099, or drichards@auburnwa.gov
- Kirsten Reynolds, Community Services Project Assistant, (253) 876-1964, or kreynolds@auburnwa.gov
- Tim Carlaw, Storm Drainage Engineer, (253) 804-5060, or tcarlaw@auburnwa.gov